

MASONRY IN MANITOBA

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WHAT IS MASONRY?

Have you ever stopped to think what Masonry is and does? Masonry is the product of the most unselfish thinking, the most whole-hearted and selfless effort, the world has ever known. Through it a universal brotherhood of millions of men has been brought into being, to any one of which you and I have the right to turn, sure of sympathy, understanding and some help in time of need.

Through Masonry, a system of philosophy has been evolved, and through its lodges that philosophy is taught to all brethren of the M.M. degree, without money and without price. Through it we learn, charity, toleration, courage, fortitude, justice, truth, brotherly love, relief. Through it we learn decency, patriotism, high-thinking, honour, honesty, and helpfulness. Through it, and all of these, we are made into better men, better citizens, better husbands, better fathers, better lovers, better legislators, better followers of our several vocations.

Masonry may penetrate only a fraction of an inch beneath the skin of her followers, but by that fraction of an inch the man who takes even a little of her blessings to himself is a better man, and so the world is a better place for the rest of us. In some of us it strikes deep, deep. We become soaked through and through with Masonic ideas, and strive in our feeble, human way, to show forth to the world whatever measure we may accomplish of the perfection for which Masonry strives.

Those of us who take it seriously and love it much also make the world a better place for the rest of us.

The lodge provides a spiritual home for brethren who may have no other. If one has another in his church, the lodge gives him a second spiritual home to which he may go once in a while and feel more strongly, perhaps, than in his church the close touch of a brother's hand, the sweet smile of a brother's love, the supporting arm of a brother's strength. To me, my lodge is a rest, a haven, a harbour for the tired mind.

When I come to this lodge, whose destinies I guided so long ago, and which I have watched grow from a fledgling little body to a mature organization, I find myself uplifted, strengthened, made whole again. I may come tired, worn, weary with the day; I leave refreshed, invigorated, helped with the reviving of old truths, the remaking of old vows, the renewing of old ties.

Our ancient brethren had "cities of refuge," to which the fleeing man, criminal or oppressed, might run for safety. Masonry is our modern "city of refuge," to which we, criminal in intent if we are such, or oppressed with injustice and cruelty may fly for spiritual comfort and safety, knowing that within the four walls of a lodge is rest and peace and comfort.

All this has the lodge in particular, and Masonry in general, offered since the beginning, to all upon whom Masonry lays her gentle hands. You are the recipient of her bounty, as am I. Within these walls we all take generously and without stint from Masonry's storehouse of loveliness, of beauty, of rest and comfort and love. What have I done for Masonry, which does so much for me?

(Carl H. Clandy.)

RECEIVED BY MAIL

We asked for it. We got it. We are very happy. The correspondence from our readers since our last issue is the heaviest we have received during the four years this publication has been travelling around the Province. Keep up the good work. It certainly augurs well for the lodge life in this jurisdiction.

The Worshipful Master at Minnedosa asks for helpful suggestions; the Senior Warden at Cardale, anticipating a year of increased responsibility in the near future, makes a similar request; the Worshipful Master of a Winnipeg lodge writes in part, "I still believe that example is better than precept and that new initiates will be more impressed with what we do than what we say. Although my term as Master is rapidly coming to an end I would like to have your views on Masonic education and I shall greatly appreciate any assistance you can give me."

The Chairman of the appropriate committee has these requests in hand and doubtless will help the brethren to arrange suitable plans for their respective lodges.

We suggest at this time that the brief items which appear in our pages might with some profit be used as source material for further extended studies on the subjects coming under review. Our space is limited and to give variety to each issue it is necessary to condense in short form many subjects which in themselves could fill an entire issue.

One other communication was received from Flin Flon. This will be dealt with under a heading of its own as it is of current interest to all Canadian brethren.

To those who sent complimentary letters and made remarks verbally and by telephone we say once again—thank you. To others we extend the invitation to send us a contribution because we need your help in keeping our little paper newsy and informative.

NEWFOUNDLAND

An interesting letter reached our desk from Brother C. C. Settrington at Flin Flon. We quote herewith an extract "with the forthcoming entry of Newfoundland into Canadian confederation I have been wondering if our Grand Lodge officers have made, or are making, any plans to suitably welcome the Newfoundland lodges into Canada. I realize that their lodges work under the Grand Jurisdictions of England and Scotland and of course do not know whether their status will change when confederation becomes an actuality."

What will happen Masonically must be left to the future. If however our tenth province follows the lead given by the other nine provinces over the years then in due time we shall undoubtedly see a Grand Lodge of Newfoundland. In the meantime there is nothing we can do to bring this about. Grand Lodges are the creations of the Freemasons resident in an area where sovereign power can be exercised.

Take the case of Manitoba as an example. Our province came into being in July, 1870. The pioneer lodge, formed in 1864 was dormant and Prince Rupert's Lodge was not instituted until the month of December, 1870. Shortly after a second lodge was formed; Lisgar, in the neighbourhood of Selkirk, then in 1872, Ancient Landmark Lodge was instituted. All three lodges of necessity were obliged to seek charters from the Grand Lodge of Canada (in Ontario).

These lodges carried on under their charters until the month of May, 1875, when a meeting to form the Grand Lodge of Manitoba was called by the Past Masters, Worshipful Masters and Wardens of all three lodges. As a result our Grand Lodge came into being, the charters from the Grand Lodge of Canada (in Ontario) were surrendered and new charters issued by the newly formed Grand Lodge.

When the Provinces of Alberta and Saskatchewan were created the lodges meeting in these parts had all been chartered by the Grand Lodge of Manitoba. Being sovereign in their own territory it was only natural that the Freemasons of the two Provinces should withdraw from the parent Grand Lodge and form Grand Lodges of their own. This they did and now carry on their work in the jurisdiction which is theirs.

If and when our brethren in Newfoundland decide to have a Grand Lodge then no Province in the Dominion will extend a welcome more sincere than that of Manitoba. The act leading to the creation of such a Grand Lodge rests solely with the lodges in Newfoundland. It is our guess that in due time we shall find members of the Grand Lodge of Newfoundland showing their cards and fraternizing with their brethren throughout the length and breadth of this great Dominion.

OUR CHRISTMAS MESSAGE

This is the month of Christmas—the season of goodwill—the time with its hallowed associations which prompt all of us to exemplify the spirit of brotherhood.

Today as never before, at least in our own time, we need a deeper realization that all mankind must live in harmony and in strict conformity to the new doctrine proclaimed by the Prince of Peace over nineteen hundred years ago. “Behold, a new commandment have I given you, that you love one another.”

The message of Christmas and the message of Freemasonry is the same. Underlying all the teachings and symbolism of the Craft we follow the golden threads of human freedom and religious liberty. Our fraternity stands today, as it has done through the ages, as one of the most powerful agencies for good in this old world and we who constitute its membership must realize it is because we live in an atmosphere of freedom that we can proclaim the principles of Brotherly Love, Relief and Truth.

As we contemplate the drama of Bethlehem let us try to correlate our personal experiences with the time in which we live—Let us ask ourselves, as Freemasons, if we, in our individual capacity, are free from hatred and prejudice and do we govern our thoughts and actions by the new commandment referred to.

The struggle in the world is for men's hearts and minds. It is not a better plan we need but a more intelligent effort to develop better men. We already have the plan laid out on every Masonic trestle board in the country. Herein we discover the opportunity for Freemasonry and it can only be achieved through the medium of the individual Freemason.

We want to make certain that our entire membership see in our system of world brotherhood the foundation stones of truth, the dimension timbers of virtue, and those rules of life which we refer to as ideals and principles. We are taught that as individuals we should discipline our emotions and properly relate ourselves to our fellow man.

This is the Christmas message sent with the fraternal greetings of your editor. We have been exchanging views through the past twelve months and stand on the threshold of the unknown—a new year. Our endeavour throughout has been to express and explain the message of Freemasonry month by month. The kind thoughts of readers who have made comment from time to time is sincerely appreciated.

Between your editor and the twelve thousand readers we believe there has been formed an intimate association. We hope to merit your commendation in the coming days.

From me to you, then, let me say, may the blessings of health, happiness and true brotherhood rest upon and abide with you and may every day be Christmas as you meet the tasks and responsibilities of life.

MASONIC MUSIC BY A MASTER-COMPOSER

What has been a truly guarded secret of Freemasonry is now shared with the music-loving world. The great Finnish composer, Jan Sibelius, became a Mason in 1923, and shortly thereafter wrote his "Masonic Ritual Music." Later, in 1935, the Grand Lodge of Finland sent a handsomely bound score of the Sibelius composition to the Grand Lodge of New York as a gift. This has been treasured as a Masonic jewel not only for its own sake but also as a memento of a great Masonic soul and one of the most eminent musical creators of our time. Previous to Sibelius, Mozart was the only great Mason-composer to have written music for the rites of the brotherhood.

The work consist of nine separate numbers each intended for a specific part of our rites. Opening with a brief "adagio" for piano, it includes five vocal solos, a march and an "a capella" chorale for male quartet. A Funeral March rounds out the work. In all of these pieces, composed in a deeply reverent spirit, Sibelius has written music actuated by the lofty ideals expressed in the texts.

The story of this ritual music was disclosed to the "New York Times" by Capt. Maurice Witherspoon (U.S.N. Ret.), an officer of the New York Grand Lodge and it was with his approval that the data has been made known through the music publisher of the Grand Lodge, Marshall Kernochan, also a high-ranking Mason.

As the gift-manuscript bore Swedish and Finnish texts for the vocal pieces it was necessary to have English translations made of these verses of various poets, so George Sjoblom was asked to indicate the meaning of each word, and then the literal translation was turned into poetry by Brother Kernochan, and both translation and publication approved by Sibelius.

In 1935 Sibelius was awarded the annual Grand Lodge medal for Distinguished Achievement given for "outstanding accomplishment in some field of endeavor beneficial to humanity." Two years later the "Masonic Ritual Music" had its first American performance at a musical evening of the American Lodge of Research given in the New York Masonic Temple, and again four years later.

The parts made available for public use, have, of course, all Masonic references removed. More than 100,000 copies of this form have been sold and the first performance of the chorus "Onward, Ye People" anywhere outside a Masonic Lodge was sung by 500 voices at the New York World's Fair in 1938, under Winnipeg's dearly-remembered Hugh Ross.

Profits from the published portions have been placed to the credit of Jan Sibelius, awaiting his order.

The chorus, which has had marked success, was also sung by the New York Glee Club, with organ accompaniment, on a Masonic program carried by radio over the Mutual network, the first Masonic broadcast ever given in that State.

(W.R.M., Seven Oaks Lodge)

MASONRY HAS A MEANING

As we approach the closing days of a year which has been full of deep concern because of the difficulty for our leaders to get together and form a satisfactory plan upon which to build an enduring place we would direct the attention of our members to the challenging words of that great Freemason, Joseph Fort Newton who wrote:

"Masonry is something more than a social club, more even than a philanthropic society—it is the keeper of a great and ancient wisdom, wrought out through ages of experience and insight; a practical moral and spiritual wisdom learned by living, telling us what life means and how to live it. This gentle light of truth shines in the lodge, veiled in symbols, awaiting our discovery and use to free us from ignorance and fear, which so distort our human life.

"Here is the real secret of Masonry, something other and deeper than our signs, tokens and passwords, by which we may learn to live nobly, faithfully, fruitfully."

Yes, we lack confidence in our fellowman. Where, in all the human agencies of our time can we find a more suitable environment to create and develop the spirit of genuine confidence than in our lodge? What an opportunity has been opened to the men who have been privileged to be ranked by their fellows as a Master Mason.

It is suggested here and now that more emphasis be placed on the practical side of Masonry during 1949. There is no reason why the activities of our lodges should centre entirely upon the conferring of degrees. Here is an opportune time for the newly installed officers, especially the Worshipful Masters, to get out of the routine rut. What has been the plan in the past has not measured up to the full stature of Ancient Free and Accepted Freemasonry. Begin now your preparation of a calendar which will bring greater understanding to your lodge members. Make it possible for them to learn something about the history, the philosophy and the implications of Freemasonry. The responsibility is that of the elected officers because we look to them for creative guidance.

Don't be discouraged by the thought that you are short of material with which to make a start. There are brethren in every part of the jurisdiction ready and willing to undertake the work and there is no doubt we have men of ability who can make great contributions.

Think ahead of today. Ask yourself, as you begin your term in the new office, what contribution will I make to our great plan if only degrees are conferred during the next twelve months?

Make your motto for 1949 "let us plan our work and let us work our plan."

We do need confidence in ourselves and also in our fellow-members.